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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE JAMIE MOORE. PLEASE PASS TO NSC JEFF HOVENIER

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM SOCI HU
SUBJECT: ATTRACTING NEGATIVE ATTENTION - FIDESZ MAYOR'S ANTI-ROMA, ANTI-GAY, ANTI-ISRAEL COMMENTS

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Fidesz Mayor Oszkar Molnar's recent inflammatory comments concerning Roma, gays, and Jews have attracted a strong response from opposition party leaders and citizen groups. Meanwhile, senior Fidesz party leaders, including Party President Viktor Orban, attempt to remain above the fray, with lukewarm admonishments to Molnar. Fidesz Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Zsolt Nemeth's October 21-22 meetings with the Department, NSC, Helsinki Commission, and the Hill, provide an opportunity to underscore with Fidesz that Party messages resonate well beyond Hungary's borders. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Fifty-three year old Oszkar Molnar, a Fidesz parliamentarian and mayor of Edeleny in northeast Hungary, is the focus of media and civic group attention for inflammatory comments concerning Roma, gays and Jews. In June, Molnar suggested at a meeting of the Edeleny city council that pregnant Roma women beat themselves with rubber hammers and take various medications so as to give birth to "dumb" children, for whom they can collect welfare payments. After his remarks became national public knowledge through release of a video this fall, Molnar initially announced that he stands by his statements. Days later, several hundred Roma protested outside the Edeleny mayor's office.

¶3. (SBU) During the same city council meeting, Molnar also spoke of homosexuals (using various slurs), specifically mentioning the former Prime Minister Office's State Secretary Gabor Szetey, stating that once Szetey "is in prison, he will find out what gay marriage is like." When asked later by reporters, Molnar would not say why he thinks Szetey ought to end up in prison, commenting that 'Gays can be gays, as far as I'm concerned - I just have one problem with them. They should not force their illness or problems on the rest of society."

¶4. (SBU) In December 2008, Molnar, during a local television interview, commented that he "loves Hungary, the Hungarian people, and I prefer Hungarian interests against global capital or big Jewish capital that wants to swallow up the world, especially Hungary." He said Jewish children in Israel are studying Hungarian, "the language of their future home," implying a takeover of Hungary by Israeli capital and companies.

¶5. (SBU) After the June comments surfaced in September 2009, Fidesz issued a statement that it considers the matter a "local government issue." Tibor Navracsics, Fidesz Parliamentary Faction leader, called Molnar in for a meeting on October 12 and released the following statement: "Navracsics and Molnar agreed that all forms of anti-Semitism, discrimination, violence and lies cannot be tolerated in politics." However, apparently Molnar will face no negative repercussions from his party - at least not officially/publicly. Fidesz President Viktor Orban publicly

stated that he will wait for the people of Edeleny and the area to speak before a decision is made on whether Molnar will once again run for an individual seat in Parliament next year. Orban told reporters: "If you have questions about what a Member of Parliament meant when making a statement, you should ask the individual himself."

CALLS FOR RESIGNATION

¶ 6. (SBU) The Socialists (MSZP), Free Democrats (SZDSZ) and Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) party leaders have all called for Molnar's resignation. MSZP spokesman Istvan Nyako, responding to Navracsics public statement following his meeting with Molnar, said that Navracsics has not been distancing himself from Molnar; rather he has taken the side of "fascists." Additionally, protesters gathered outside the Fidesz Party Headquarters in Budapest to publicly pressure the Party leadership to call for the Mayor's resignation.

FIDESZ RESPONDS

¶ 7. (SBU) During a morning TV appearance the week of October 12, Fidesz President Orban stated that all MPs should be expected to choose their words carefully, and Molnar specifically should make it clear what he had in mind. When asked what he makes of Molnar's comments, Orban said "the comments made by my fellow MP Oszkar Molnar are embarrassing - but it would be far more embarrassing if I belonged to the same party as Nyako and had to explain his statements."

Asked why Fidesz does not expel Molnar - Orban said they would do so if they had reason for it, but Fidesz's ground rules list the reasons for exclusion from the party.
(Comment. Molnar's comments apparently do not meet the requirements. End comment.)

¶ 8. (SBU) Comment. While Molnar's statements do not reflect the official principles espoused by mainstream Fidesz party members, it would seem important for the Party, on a national level, to distance itself from unacceptable rhetoric from a member of Parliament. Fidesz's initial response to frame the statements as a local issue reflects a certain level of naivete that even in a local setting, such statements reflect on the party as a whole. The Charge raised the issue with an advisor to Orban and was assured Molnar would not be on the Party list for the next Parliamentary elections. The advisor had little comment on the party's ambivalent response. The muted Fidesz response also reflects their challenge in dealing with the extreme-right Jobbik party six months out from national elections. Publicly anti-Roma, anti-gay and anti-Jewish, Jobbik would seize any opportunity to paint Fidesz into the opposing corner. That said, with the expected Fidesz victory in the upcoming national elections, Fidesz Foreign Affairs Chairman Zsolt Nemeth's visit to the U.S. the week of October 19 provides an opportunity to underscore U.S. commitments and expectations concerning tolerance and minority rights to the highest levels of the Fidesz party. End comment.

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